children may give away a recently born female child and adopt a sīm-pûà in her place, nursing her future daughter-in-law in place of her own daughter. Almost all sīm-pûà are adopted before the age of four, and the average for girls in Hsiachichou is somewhere between the ages of two and three. Although a sīm-pûà is a daughter-in-law in her foster family insofar as her marriage status is concerned, the relation between her and her future husband during their childhood is more like that of brother and sister. As children they address one another as brother and sister; they play and eat together just as do the other children of the family; and in most families they share the same sleeping platform with their parents until they are nine or ten years of age. At a later age when they have been made aware of their future relationship as husband and wife, they may choose to avoid one another to some extent, but this is not socially required of them. The individual attitudes of the villagers and the general mores of the community seem to agree that a sīm-pûà and her foster brother are brother and sister until they become husband and wife.

Although there are undoubtedly other factors which enter into the reactions of many villagers to the sīm-pûà form of marriage, our suggestion is that the rejection of this form of marriage is primarily the result of a sexual aversion arising out of their childhood association. It is possible that in growing up in a situation in which they are identified as "brother" and "sister," the couple comes to think of themselves as real siblings. They therefore find the thought of marriage "embarrassing" because it is generally taboo for any

brother and sister to marry. The effect of their childhood association is to create conditions which result in a generalization of the incest taboo. Another possible interpretation is that the very fact of their intimate childhood association is itself directly responsible for this feeling of aversion. As Edward Westermarck suggested some eighty years ago, it may be that the incest taboo is a consequence of "intimate and prolonged childhood association." In Westermarck's words, "the fundamental cause of exogamous prohibitions seems to be the remarkable absence of erotic feelings between persons living very closely together from childhood, leading to a positive feeling of aversion when the act is thought of."[1] The first hypothesis suggests that foster siblings are averse to the idea of their sexual union because they consider themselves brother and sister, while the second hypothesis suggests that they reject the idea of their union because they have lived together as brother and sister.

Which of these two interpretations is correct must unfortunately remain a moot question so far as these data are concerned. The two crucial variables are experimentally confounded. The parties to the sim-pûh marriage grow up in conditions which identify them as brother and sister, and they also experience a prolonged and intimate association from early childhood. But regardless of whether the crucial antecedent condition is their sibling identification or their early and prolonged contact, it seems clear that most of the parties to the sim-pûh marriage do experience a real aversion to the idea of their sexual union. Aside from the reports of many villagers that such marriages

[1] Edward Westermarck, The History of Human Marriage, (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1921), Vol. II, p. vi.